

April 28, 2021

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Carl W. Lejuez, Ph.D.  
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



RE: Master of Arts (MA) Human Rights

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees approve a new Master of Arts (MA) in Human Rights.

BACKGROUND:

UConn students have shown increasing interest in earning a master's degree in Human Rights as part of their trajectory following graduation. Exit surveys with graduating seniors indicate that there is interest among students in pursuing a high quality and affordable master's degree program to prepare them to either secure meaningful employment in human rights-oriented fields or pursue doctoral or law studies. The undergraduate co-major has grown rapidly since its creation in 2012 and now enrolls on average 125-135 students a year; the minor has another 50-60 students a year and many more students who take human rights courses express an interest in advanced training. Creating a master's degree that can be earned by UConn students in one year would help us to meet the educational and professional needs of our students and also allow us to continue to raise our profile as a preeminent educator in the human rights field.

The Master's Degree in Human Rights is designed to advance participants' knowledge of human rights as both an academic and professional field, hone students' critical inquiry skills, and ultimately enable students to develop as competitive candidates for professional positions in industry, government, education, and non-profit sectors. Students will leave the program with specialized knowledge in at least one topical approach to human rights research and practice. Along with this specialization, students will also gain competency in advanced research skills. The Master's Degree in Human Rights is designed primarily to offer undergraduate students who have either majored/minored in human rights or demonstrate a strong interest in the field at UConn an opportunity to receive a master's degree in this field here at UConn. These students will have a chance to begin graduate-level work in their senior year and complete their program of study for a master's in human rights following a fifth year. The degree will also be available to external (non-UConn) students or undergraduates with other backgrounds, although these students will typically require more than a year to complete the degree.

We anticipate class sizes in the first years of the program to include 5-6 students in the first cohort, growing to 10-12 students annually.

## Request for New UConn Academic Degree Program

### General Information

Name of degree program:	Master of Arts (MA) Human Rights
Name of sponsoring Department:	Global Affairs
Name of sponsoring College:	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS)
Campuses:	Storrs
Contact persons:	Kathryn Libal
Type of Proposal:	New
Type of Program:	Master of Arts
Anticipated Initiation Date:	Fall 2021
Anticipated Date of First Graduation:	Spring 2023
Program Payment Type:	Tuition based
CIP Code:	30.0000 Multi-/Interdisciplinary Studies, General

### Justification for the New Program

UConn students have shown increasing interest in earning a master's degree in Human Rights as part of their trajectory following graduation. Exit surveys with graduating seniors indicate that there is interest among students in pursuing a high quality and affordable master's degree program to prepare them to either secure meaningful employment in human rights-oriented fields or pursue doctoral or law studies. Recent changes at the Graduate School make earning a master's degree in the "fifth" year both feasible and desirable. Consultation with several HRI board members who work in the field of human rights also affirms the value of providing graduate credentialing in human rights, and that this is regarded as more desirable for entry-level positions than having a bachelor's degree alone.

The undergraduate co-major has grown rapidly since its creation in 2012 and now enrolls on average 125-135 students a year; the minor has another 50-60 students a year and many more students who take human rights courses express an interest in advanced training. In recent years we have placed students in institutions in the United Kingdom for one-year master's degrees, in part because they offered a more affordable option than similar programs at Columbia University and the University of Minnesota. Creating a master's degree that can be earned by UConn students in one year would help us to meet the educational and professional needs of our students and also allow us to continue to raise our profile as a preeminent educator in the human rights field.

### Are there similar programs in CT or elsewhere?

No master's or expedited master's programs in human rights exist in Connecticut. There are four master's in human rights programs in the United States, and a fifth program is in development at the University of California, Davis. Columbia University houses one of the oldest two-year MA

programs in the country at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights. Established in 1998, the 30-credit degree can be completed on a part-time or full-time basis and requires a thesis. This program carries a tuition cost of \$90,000 for three semesters of study. The University of Arizona offers an online master's program with a focus on practice, which can be completed in 12-18 months. It is fully online and costs \$15,000. The University of Minnesota has a new master's degree linked to the Humphrey School of Public Policy; it is a 45 credit, 2-year program that requires a 400 hour internship in the first year and a joint or individual capstone project in the second year. The program tuition is approximately \$57,000 (two years) for an out-of-state student. The University of Binghamton (SUNY) recently added a two year master's degree focusing on human rights practice within their Human Development and Family Studies program. Binghamton's Master of Science in Human Rights is a 36 credit program that would cost approximately \$38,000 for an out-of-state student.

A Master's Degree in Human Rights at UConn would fill an important need not currently met by existing programs. Most importantly, it would offer an expedited and cost-effective option for our graduates seeking to deepen their knowledge of human rights and gain the expertise and credentials they need to be competitive in the field. Of the three public schools offering a human rights MA, the programs at Arizona and Binghamton are much narrower and do not have the strength of a world-class interdisciplinary human rights center behind it. The University of Minnesota's program would be our closest competitor; our program, however, is not located in a school of public policy but is university-wide and is more affordable.

**What are the desired learning outcomes of the program?**

The Master's Degree in Human Rights is designed to advance participants' knowledge of human rights as both an academic and professional field, hone students' critical inquiry skills, and ultimately enable students to develop as competitive candidates for professional positions in industry, government, education, and non-profit sectors.

Students will leave the program with specialized knowledge in at least one topical approach to human rights research and practice. Along with this specialization, students will also gain competency in advanced research skills. These skills include but are not limited to:

- Identifying the structural causes of contemporary human rights issues and the actors that contribute to and alleviate these problems;
- Designing and executing independent research related to human rights praxis;
- Applying ethical, appropriately specified research and evaluation procedures;
- Operating both qualitative and quantitative data management platforms; and
- Analyzing and leveraging research data to address real, human rights problems related to their career goals.

Finally, upon completion of the degree program, students will have developed their professional identity as a human rights practitioner. Students build their professional competency by integrating their academic training with a human rights practice-based professional work experience that deepens their engagement with the skills, values, and training that are key to job success in their desired industry.

### **Program Description**

The Master's Degree in Human Rights is designed primarily to offer undergraduate students who have either majored/minored in human rights or demonstrate a strong interest in the field at UConn an opportunity to receive a master's degree in this field here at UConn. These students will have a chance to begin graduate-level work in their senior year and complete their program of study for a master's in human rights following a fifth year. The degree will also be available to external (non-UConn) students or undergraduates with other backgrounds, although these students will typically require more than a year to complete the degree. The Master's in Human Rights offers an opportunity for students to deepen their substantive knowledge base and research skills and to develop human rights practice skills through a supervised practicum and project-based work at a graduate level. The master's degree will be one of a handful of graduate programs in human rights in the United States. Building on the stellar faculty and strong institutional infrastructure in Global Affairs and HRI, in collaboration with CLAS and other schools, the program promises to offer an excellent interdisciplinary, methodologically and practice-oriented curriculum to prepare students to enter a range of non-profit or governmental positions or pursue degrees in law or other graduate programs in the future.

The Human Rights Institute's Graduate Certificate program, which was created in 2008, already has a robust line-up of courses in its curriculum that will form the backbone of the Master's Degree in Human Rights. The Core and Foundational Courses for the Master's Degree, which will constitute at least two-thirds of the courses needed for the degree, are regularly taught by HRI joint faculty as part of the Certificate in Human Rights. These courses will be complemented by an additional four electives chosen from a range of courses taught regularly by HRI joint and affiliated faculty across CLAS, Neag, Law, and the School of Social Work.

Overview: The Master's Degree in Human Rights requires the completion of 30 credit hours of graduate coursework. Undergraduate students who wish to pursue the degree can take 6 to 12 credits during their senior year. These students will take at least one graduate course per semester of their senior year, and the remaining credits during their 5th (MA) year. Up to 12 credits of required graduate coursework included on the student's undergraduate plan of study can also be used toward both the BA and MA Plans of Study. The required 30 credit hours includes HRTS 5301, 5351, 5401, the HRTS 5282/5600 professional development sequence, at least two pre-approved foundational electives, and four elective three-credit 5000/6000/7000-level courses with significant HRTS content. Details of the plan of study are provided below.

Plan of Study: All MA students develop a proficiency in human rights practice and a specialization in a human rights topic area of their choosing. There are 12 Common Core credits and a three-credit practicum (200 hours) required; 15 additional elective credits, at least six credits of which are drawn from our Foundational Elective list and the rest from Supplemental Electives, comprise the 30-credit MA. Note that the Common Core credits are offered by the Human Rights Institute and not cross-listed with other programs. The Foundational Electives have been developed by faculty jointly appointed to HRI and are taught regularly for this reason (see below). The Supplemental Electives are courses that have been taught with good regularity in recent years and are highly relevant as additional electives. A student could feasibly complete their studies even if many of the Supplementary Electives are not offered in a given year.

Students are required to complete 12 Common Core credits pertaining to the interdisciplinary study and practice of human rights, including:

- HRTS 5301: Contemporary Debates in Human Rights
- HRTS 5351: Topics in Human Rights Practice
- HRTS 5600: Human Rights Practice Lab and
- HRTS 5401: Methods in Human Rights Research and Practice.

This course sequence provides students with knowledge of the theoretical foundations of human rights, insight into the challenges of defending and promoting human rights practically, and also guided instruction on how to ethically and reliably conduct human rights research.

Program participants gain substantial professional experience while pursuing the degree by taking the one additional required course HRTS 5282: Practicum in Human Rights. HRTS 5282: Practicum in Human Rights is a three-credit course that provides students with hands-on experience with real, human rights-based problem solving experiences related to their career goals. This course prepares students to participate in HRTS 5600: Human Rights Practice Lab, where students develop and execute a human rights research project under the supervision of faculty; the project will be oriented toward solving a real-world problem and may grow out of the student's practicum experience. These courses integrate professional work experience opportunities within the academic program structure to make our applicants more competitive on the job market after graduation.

Students gain proficiency in a human rights topic area of their choosing by taking an additional 15 credits of elective coursework, at least six of which should be drawn from our list of foundational elective courses:

Foundational Electives

EDCI 5847: Human Rights and Social Justice in Education (taught annually)

HRTS 5055: Theory and Practice of International Criminal Justice

HRTS 5095: Special Topics in Human Rights\*  
HRTS/HIST 5270: History of Human Rights (taught biannually)  
HRTS 5351: Topics in Human Rights Practice\* (taught annually beginning 2021)  
HRTS 5390/POLS 5390: Economic Rights  
HRTS 5450: Contemporary Issues in Genocide Studies (new, to be taught biannually)  
HRTS 5460: Human Rights and Armed Conflict (new, to be taught biannually)  
HRTS 5499: Independent Study in Human Rights  
HRTS 5899: Variable Topics in Human Rights\*  
LAW 7878: International Human Rights (taught annually)  
SWEL 5385: Human Rights and Social Work (taught annually)

Each of these courses has been developed by HRI's jointly appointed faculty and are generally offered annually. (\*May be repeated for a total of 9 credits with a change in subject matter.)

The remaining credits required to complete the MA plan of study can be drawn from either the foundational electives (above) or the supplementary electives (below), depending on the students' professional goals and interests:

**Supplementary Electives**

ANTH 5390: Cultural Rights  
ENGL 6540 Seminar in Literature and Human Rights  
HRTS/ANTH 5380: Propaganda, Disinformation, and Hate Speech  
LAW 7380: Critical Race Theory  
LAW 7653: European Human Rights  
LAW 7695: Philosophy of Human Rights  
LAW 7814: Refugee Law  
LAW 7876: Philosophy of Collective Rights and Self-Determination  
LAW 7883: Human Rights and Post Conflict Justice  
LAW 7914: American Slavery and American Law: The Legal Origins of Racism in America  
POLS 5115: Theories of Human Rights  
POLS 5322: Assessing Human Security  
PUBH 5460/LAW 7592: Health and Human Rights  
SOC/HRIS 5825: Sociology of Human Rights  
SOC 5515: Sociology of Immigration

Other elective options may be approved by the Graduate Studies Director after consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee.

**Proposed Graduate Catalogue Copy**

The Human Rights Institute offers a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Human Rights. The Master's Degree in Human Rights is designed to advance participants' knowledge of human rights as both an academic and professional field, hone students' critical inquiry skills, and ultimately enable students to develop as competitive candidates for professional positions in industry, government, education, and non-profit sectors. The Master's Degree in Human Rights requires the completion of 30 credit hours of graduate coursework, up to 12 of which can be earned during the student's senior year. Up to 12 credits of approved graduate coursework included on the student's undergraduate plan of study can also be used toward both the B.A. and M.A. plans of study. The required 30 credit hours include 12 Common Core credits and a required three-credit practicum (200 hours), at least six Foundational Elective credits, and nine additional elective credits drawn from either the Foundational Elective or Supplementary Elective lists. Other elective options may be approved by the Graduate Education Director after consultation with the Graduate Education Committee.

Common Core Courses: HRTS 5301, 5351\*, 5401, 5282, and 5600

Foundational Electives: LAW 7878, HRTS/HIST 5270, HRTS 5390/ECON 5128/POLS 5390, SWEL 5385, EDCI 5847, HRTS 5450, 5351\*, 5095\*, 5499, and 5899\*

Supplementary Electives: ALDS/GERM/CLCS 5324, 5325, ANTH 5390, HRTS/ANTH 5380, HRTS 5055, LAW 7380, 7653, 7695, 7814, 7876, 7883, 7914, POLS 5115, 5322, PUBH 5460/LAW 7592, SOCI/HRTS 5825, and SOCI 5515

\*May be repeated for a total of 9 credits with a change in subject matter.

**Faculty Involvement**

The faculty staffing the master's in human rights are the joint and affiliated faculty and post-doc researchers who regularly teach graduate seminars for the current Graduate Certificate in Human Rights. HRI's eleven joint faculty teach half of their courses in HRTS, including most of the core and foundational courses in the MA plan of study. In addition, HRI hosts three post-doctoral researchers whose courses are devoted entirely to HRI. All faculty involved in the program are committed to liaising and providing research mentorship to graduate students; the Director of Graduate Education is the advisor of record for students in the MA for academic advising. The Director is supported by the HRI Program Manager and HRI Education Program Coordinator, who are responsible for undergraduate advising and thus critical interlocutors for the 5th year MA program.

Key faculty:

Molly Land (Director of Graduate Studies) (GEC, joint appointment)

Kathryn Libal (GEC ex officio, Social Work/Human Rights)

Glenn Mitoma (GEC, Education/Human Rights)

Katharina von Hammerstein (GEC)

Megan Berthold (GEC)

Shareen Hertel (Political Science/Human Rights)

Elizabeth Holzer (Sociology/Human Rights)

Nishith Prakash (Economics/Human Rights)

David Richards (Political Science/Human Rights)

Sara Silverstein (History/Human Rights)

Richard Wilson (Law)

\*Two additional tenure track faculty members (Dramatic Arts/Human Rights and Art History/Human Rights) and two assistant professors in residences to be hired for 2021-22 will also participate in teaching, mentoring, and advising students in the program

### **Enrollment and graduate projections**

We anticipate class sizes in the first years of the program to include 5-6 students in the first cohort, growing to 10-12 students annually. If approved, we would accept a first round of applicants in Spring 2021 for a graduation date of Spring 2023 and would expect 5-6 students to graduate in the 2023 class. We anticipate between 10-12 students graduating annually through 2026 and 12-15 students to graduate annually through 2030.

### **Program Evaluation**

Student assessments will be based on grades earned in the ten graduate courses taken in pursuit of the MA degree, supervisor evaluations of student practicum experience, and faculty, self-assessments, and peer evaluation of research projects designed and executed in HRTS 5600: Human Rights Practice Lab.

Program evaluation will be based on a range in inputs, including the following: student course evaluations, focus groups held with each cohort at the end of their MA, and on the placement of MA students upon completion of the program.

- We will conduct a survey of student expectations at program start and in autumn of their MA year;
- Hold a focus group with each cohort at the end of their MA;
- Change in student knowledge/skills/confidence will be assessed through a class discussion in HRTS 5600: Human Rights Practice Lab;
- Examine student course evaluations;
- Student evaluations also will be collected in Exit Surveys administered immediately following program completion;

- Data on students' post-graduate placements will be collected initially in the Exit Survey, and again 1 year, 3 years and 5 years after graduation; Note: Program staff will rely on MA advisors, Graduate Education Coordinators, and HRI professional advising staff to communicate with alumni and collect this information.

In addition, on an annual basis the Graduate Education Committee will assess any gaps in the curriculum and make recommendations for curricular change.

Metrics for success will include:

- Meaningful/educational/productive placement of students in high profile/high impact human rights organizations for the zero-credit practicum;
- Quality of Human Rights Practice Lab projects generated in the capstone;
- Extent to which community contacts have been deepened and whether or not findings from project are meaningfully disseminated to relevant stakeholders;
- Percentage of students placed in jobs within one year that draw upon skills, values and knowledge gained during the master's program;
- Report of students recommending the program post-graduation;
- Faculty perspectives on the program;
- Growth in applications, enrollment, and completion rates;
- Increase in inquiries;
- Diversity of students and faculty who show interest/engagement with program;
- Feedback from internship sites and community partners;
- Alumni engagement/ recommendations;
- Alumni long-term career trajectory.

### **Program Administration**

The MA Program in Human Rights will be administered by the HRI Graduate Education Committee (GEC), comprised of up to six members from the Gladstein Faculty Advisory Committee. The GEC reads admissions files and determines who is admitted in spring of each year. They will consider applications on a rolling basis, with priority given to students who apply by May 15. The GEC is also charged with approving course additions or revisions on the MA, administering the existing Graduate Certificate in Human Rights, and making decisions about scholarships and other funding opportunities in consultation with the Director of HRI, Director of Graduate Education, and the Director of Undergraduate Education.

The primary audience for the program is UConn undergraduates who are Human Rights majors/minors. However, other UCONN seniors and non-UCONN students with a BA can apply. If admitted, we would make arrangements for the fulfillment of their course of study on an ad hoc basis. The logistics of preparing files and corresponding with interested and accepted students will be handled by the HRI Educational Program Coordinator, Alyssa Webb, with the

assistance of HRI's Director of Graduate Education. HRI's Educational Program Manager and Educational Program Coordinator, who already advise our undergraduate HRTS majors and minors, will continue as academic advisors for students admitted to the MA program. In addition, a faculty liaison/mentor will be identified for each student based on shared interests. This faculty member will be able to provide additional insights into decisions about the internship placement and preparing to apply for work post-graduating in the field of human rights broadly speaking.

The HRI Director of Graduate Education is charged with direct oversight of the program, in consultation with the Director of the Human Rights Institute. Future programmatic changes will largely be determined by vote within the Graduate Education Committee, though if changes are substantive and entail additional resources from the Human Rights Institute, such changes can only occur with approvals by the HRI Director and the Gladstein Committee.

### **Funding and Financial Resources Needed**

This is a tuition-based program with no graduate assistantship support. A limited number of fellowships will be made available to support the 0-credit summer internship/practicum between the Senior and 5th year from the Human Rights Institute resources. The model builds upon the internship fellowship program for undergraduate majors and a fellowship of \$5000 will be provided on a selective basis for students completing a practicum out of state.

### **Other Resource Needs**

This program can be realized in its current form using extant University resources. This program will not require the University to acquire any special facilities or equipment.

### **Consultation with other potentially affected units**

HRI has done outreach with all departments or schools that have courses that are part of the "foundational electives" or "supplementary electives" on the MA plan, or may otherwise be affected by the Human Rights MA. We received strong support for the MA program across the board. We secured approvals from the following departments and schools: Anthropology, Curriculum and Instruction and the Neag School of Education, English, History, Political Science, Public Health, School of Law, School of Social Work, and Sociology regarding inclusion of courses.

### **Who can apply to this program?**

Internal applicants (current UConn students enrolled in another UConn degree or certificate program), External applicants (individuals who are not currently UConn students)

### **Anticipated term and year of first enrollment**

Fall 2021

### **Admission Requirements**

Undergraduate students seeking to pursue the MA at the completion of their senior year can apply during their junior year to be a part of the undergraduate cohort for the program. These students, as well as any students who are not a part of the program's undergraduate cohort, must also apply for admission to the MA through the Graduate School in their senior year or after. For both steps in the application process, applicants submit (1) a personal statement, (2) a resume, (3) an unofficial transcript and (4) two letters of recommendation. The GRE is not required.

- 1) The Personal Statement is a concise statement that addresses applicants' interest in, and experience with, human rights, as well as a statement regarding how the MA program would further their personal and career goals.
- 2) The Resume is a curated reflection of applicants professional experience, educational achievements, and service commitments.
- 3) An Unofficial Transcript should demonstrate a minimum 3.2 GPA in their undergraduate Human Rights program or closely related coursework.
- 4) Two Letters of Recommendation should specifically address applicants' career aspirations and the activities, academic and otherwise, they have engaged in to further their professional ambitions.

### **Term(s) to which students will be admitted**

Fall

**Application deadline:** Unsure at this time

### **Initiator**

Kathryn Libal, [kathryn.libal@uconn.edu](mailto:kathryn.libal@uconn.edu), 860-218-5898

### **Program Director Name**

Molly Land, Director of Graduate Studies, [molly.land@uconn.edu](mailto:molly.land@uconn.edu), 860-570-5257

### **Administrative Contact**

Alyssa Webb, [alyssa.webb@uconn.edu](mailto:alyssa.webb@uconn.edu), 860-486-2533